

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Hill Grove School

other names/site number VDHR file no. 071-5187

**2. Location**

street & number 3580 Wards Road not for publication

city or town Hurt vicinity X

state Virginia code VA county Pittsylvania code 143 Zip 24563

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this        nomination        request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets        does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant        nationally        statewide X locally. (        See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Virginia Department of Historic Resources**

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property        meets        does not meet the National Register criteria. (        See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

       entered in the National Register

Signature of Keeper

       See continuation sheet.

       determined eligible for the

Date of Action

National Register

       See continuation sheet.

       determined not eligible for the National Register

       removed from the National Register

       other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ \_X\_ private  
☐ \_\_\_ public-local  
☐ \_\_\_ public-State  
☐ \_\_\_ public-Federal

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

\_X\_ building(s)  
 \_\_\_ district  
 \_\_\_ site  
 \_\_\_ structure  
 \_\_\_ object

### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**N/A**

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)[illegible]

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

[illegible]

**7. Description****Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

\_\_\_\_\_ no style \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_ fieldstone \_\_\_\_\_  
roof \_ metal \_\_\_\_\_  
walls \_ wood \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)Education, Ethnic History: African American  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance** 1915-1954

**Significant Dates** 1915

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

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n/a

**Cultural Affiliation** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Architect/Builder</b>	unknown
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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

## Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

\_\_\_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

\_\_\_\_ previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary Location of Additional Data

X State Historic Preservation Office

\_\_\_\_ Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property**    one acre

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

1 17 655607 4103628 2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 4

See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

Hill Grove School  
Hurt, Virginia

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title: Michael J. Pulice & John R. Kern

Organization: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Roanoke Regional Office date August 2003

street & number: 1030 Penmar Ave. SE telephone 540-857-7586

city or town Roanoke state VA zip code 24013

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Earl Hunt, Trustee of the New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church

street & number 344 Spaniel Rd telephone (434) 324-7691

city or town Hurt state VA zip code 24563

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**7. Summary Description:**

Hill Grove School, a two-room frame schoolhouse constructed in 1915 for local African American children, is located on a one-acre lot near the community of Hurt, in rural Pittsylvania County, in the western piedmont of Virginia. The building is situated on the east side of State Route 640, within a few hundred feet of the intersection of route 640 and Wards Road (State Route 668). Its primary elevation faces east, towards Wards Road.

**Description**

Hill Grove School consists of a small, simple single-story, weatherboarded, light-frame building on a fieldstone foundation, with a low-pitched side-gable roof, and a boxed cornice with returns on each end. Its entire exterior is whitewashed. The standing seam, galvanized sheet metal covering has been painted red several times, and may be original to the building. While the overall integrity of the building is good, a number of modifications were made during its years of use as a schoolhouse. The only secondary structures associated with the school, the male and female outhouses located to the rear of the schoolhouse, about 100 feet apart, were razed years ago.

An early photograph of the schoolhouse shows a neat, handsome structure, with whitewashed weatherboards. The cornice, cornerboards, and window and door surrounds were painted in a contrasting darker color, perhaps red. The margins of the rear door were painted the darker color, with its five panels painted white. Two small, corbelled brick chimneys emerged from the roof on each side of the central hall.

The primary elevation of the building features a single-bay, tin-covered, shed roof porch supported by two-by-four lumber over the entrance. The building's fenestration was always asymmetrical, but the window placements provided adequate lighting at a minimum cost. Although the porch is now flanked by six-over-six, double-hung sash windows, two to the right (north) and one to the left (south), the ghost of a third, closed up window is evident near the north corner. The gable ends originally had two six-over-six windows on each end, but while the north end retains both windows, a five-panel door replaced the window nearest the southeast corner on the south end of the building early in the school's lifetime. The outline of the window is easily detected by discontinuous weatherboards.

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The rear (west) elevation is a mirror image of the front, minus the porch. The door has been weatherboarded over, but its single-pane transom light is still exposed. To the right of the door were originally three window openings, now only two, since the window on the far (south) end has long been boarded up. The rear elevation wall to the north of the door appears to have always had only a single six-over-six window.

The wood or coal stoves that once heated the classrooms were located against the hall partitions in each room, each with its own flue piercing the roofline. The south stove was relocated to the south end of the building and the brick chimney removed long ago, while the north stove was replaced with a modern fuel-burning stove in the same location, and a concrete and terra cotta flue replaced its brick chimney. An exterior concrete block flue, extending from the ground through the center of the south gable, was built late in the school's lifetime, when the interior partition was moved and the south room became a kitchen.

The interior of the building was divided into two classrooms on each side of a central hall, with the hall serving as a cloakroom. Access to the building could have been gained at each end of the central hall originally, but the rear door at the west end of the hall was later closed off. Both entrance doors had transom windows overhead that have been left intact. The original stud partition wall forming the south side of the hall was moved, apparently intact, several feet farther to the south after the building ceased to be used as a school, creating a small kitchen at the south end of the building. During the same period, the original door from the hall to the north classroom was removed and its opening enlarged. The floors in each room are four-inch-wide unfinished tongue-and-groove pine boards, and the walls and ceilings are covered with early period two-inch-wide, painted, beaded matchboards. Window and door trim consists of painted plain, square and flat, one-inch-thick boards.

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**Justification of Criteria**

Completed in 1915, the two-room, frame Hill Grove School provided primary school education for students from the local black community before public school integration took place in the 1960s. The nominated property is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A, in the areas of Education and Ethnic Heritage: African American.

**Statement of Significance**

Alec Cook and wife Emma Cook in 1912 donated to the Trustees of Staunton River School District #6 one acre of land "back of New Bethel Colored Baptist Church...to be used for colored school purposes." The River School District #6 trustees directed construction of the two-room Hill Grove School for black students, which was completed in 1915 at a cost of \$1,500. Hill Grove continued to serve as a grade school for the education of black students until 1965, when the school was abandoned for educational purposes and was purchased by New Bethel Baptist Church, now known as New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church.<sup>1</sup>

A Virginia State Planning Board study of Pittsylvania County schools prepared in 1938 recorded no grade schools in use in the county that were built before 1900. In 1938 there were 80 grade schools for black students; 60 of those were one-room frame schools, 18 were two-room frame schools, and 2 were three-room frame schools. In 1938 Hill Grove was the fifth oldest two-room school for blacks, and only one of the four older schools was built at a cost that exceeded the \$1,500 expenditure for Hill Grove.<sup>2</sup>

In 1938 blacks represented approximately 33 percent of the Pittsylvania County population, but the value of buildings constructed for black schools represented approximately 10 percent of the total value of buildings constructed for Pittsylvania County students and still in use by that year. That is, \$104,000 had been spent by 1938 for public schools in use by black students, whereas \$929,000, or 90 percent of the total amount, had been spent for public schools in use by white students.<sup>3</sup>

Written documents from the Pittsylvania County School Board and oral and contemporary written accounts from former students and teachers combine to document the use of Hill Grove School from the 1940s until it closed in the early 1960s. An Inspection and Survey Report made by an



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insurance company in 1941 described Hill Grove as a two-room frame school without electricity, heated by two stoves with metal smoke pipes vented into two brick chimneys built from the ground. The building was in fair shape, and its value was estimated at \$1,450. An attached photograph shows a handful of students and perhaps a teacher standing outside the south gable end of the school.<sup>4</sup>

New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church deacon Earl L. Hunt attended Hill Grove School in the late 1940s before attending North Side High School in Gretna. He remembers Hill Grove School teachers Mrs. Katie B. Stone and Miss Gladys Green, still living today at 92. After graduation from Hill Grove and Gretna, Earl Hunt served in the United States Marines for six years. He then returned to Pittsylvania County and became active in New Bethel Church.<sup>5</sup>

Indiana Mitchell attended Hill Grove School for grades one through three. She remembers the same teachers, Mrs. Katie Stone and Miss Gladys Green, and that on cold mornings Mrs. Stone would have a big pot of hot chocolate on the stove, enough to give every student a cupful. Mrs. Stone or another teacher put up a curtain in one corner of the schoolroom on Fridays, and students got a chance to throw a line over the curtain and fish out a little trinket or piece of candy. Indiana Mitchell most remembers a school ground fight with another girl when Indiana tagged her classmate too hard in a softball game. Indiana Mitchell later attended Payne High School in Lynchburg before finishing Real Estate College in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and then working in that profession for more than 20 years before retiring and returning to northern Pittsylvania County.<sup>6</sup>

After earning a B.S. in elementary education at St. Paul Institute in Lawrenceville, Virginia, in 1950, Elbridge Ragland Miller taught grades one through three at Hill Grove School from 1951 to 1957. The first year her annual salary was \$2,050. Teachers were responsible for school cleanliness, care, heat, and water. Water came from a pump, and the county school board provided coal. Schoolboys brought kindling from trees behind the building. Mrs. Katie Stone, remembered by Earl Hunt and Indiana Mitchell, taught grades four through seven. Elbridge Miller remembers her years teaching at Hill Grove School with remarkable clarity. She planned supervised outdoor activities such as baseball, marbles, hide-and-seek, races, hopscotch, jump rope, and horseshoes, and rainy day indoor activities such as stories, oral reading, and spelling bees. She and the students made up many games themselves that they enjoyed together. Her summation of her years at Hill Grove speaks to her gifts as a teacher:

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My school years were very enjoyable. I had 3 classes in one room, a total of 30 children. Many of the children learned by listening to others in the room. They were a disciplined group because parents cooperated with me, as well as the other teacher who was the principal. Special events were held each 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the month. We had devotions each morning and a short program ½ hour every Friday.<sup>7</sup>

Evelyn C. Whittler spoke and wrote of her early teaching years at Hill Grove School from 1962 until 1964 when the school closed due to consolidation. She taught third and fourth grades and wrote of the experience fondly:

It was a beautiful experience working with the children and the first and second grade teacher Mrs. Lucille Younger. The parents were extremely cooperative. They took care of seeing that we were kept warm and the building was clean. We didn't have many supplies, only books and chalkboards. The students were interested in learning. Some of them furthered their education and became teachers themselves.

When she spoke of teaching the elementary school students at Hill Grove, she remembered as a young teacher that black high school students transferred from one school bus to another at Hill Grove and sometimes gave her grief. Interestingly, Evelyn Whittler, who recently retired from public school teaching but still works part time in a pre-K program, said that teachers did not spank children until after integration. At the close of her reflections on teaching at Hill Grove Elementary and elsewhere in Pittsylvania County over the following four decades, she wrote with pride, "I was a born teacher and making a difference in children's lives has fulfilled my life."<sup>8</sup>

By September 1964 Hill Grove School had been abandoned for use by the Pittsylvania County School Board and the school, described as "2 room frame, with well," was sold at public auction for \$1,050 to A. E. Hubbard, Charlie Stone, and Allan Hunt, trustees for New Bethel Stone Memorial Baptist Church.<sup>9</sup> The New Bethel Baptist Church deed to Hill Grove School was recorded in January 1965, and the school has since remained in possession of the church, now known as New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church. Church trustees successfully filed a Preliminary Application Form for the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in September 2002. The application noted that Hill Grove School is considered

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by many families in northern Pittsylvania County as a landmark to the humble beginnings of their

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ancestors. Current plans call for rehabilitation of Hill Grove School as a community center for many programs, such as “At Risk and Out-of-School Youth, Civic Meetings, and tutorial programs.”<sup>10</sup>

**Notes**

1. Deed Book 451, pp. 548-550, Pittsylvania County Circuit Court, Chatham, Virginia. Virginia State Planning Board, Pittsylvania County Study, 1938, Library of Virginia.
2. Virginia State Planning Board, Pittsylvania County Study, Library of Virginia. In 1938 there was an eight-room brick secondary school for blacks in Gretna and a five-room frame secondary school for blacks in Chatham.
3. Virginia State Planning Board, Pittsylvania County Study, 1938, Library of Virginia.
4. Hill Grove School, Insurance Inspection and Survey Report, 1941, Pittsylvania County School Board, Chatham, Virginia.
5. Earl L. Hunt, written account of attendance at Hill Grove School, Pittsylvania County, Virginia, July 2003.
6. Indiana Mitchell, written account of attendance at Hill Grove School, Pittsylvania County, Virginia, July 2003. Both Earl Hunt and Indiana Mitchell recorded the names of many classmates who attended Hill Grove School.
7. Elbridge Ragland Miller, written account of teaching at Hill Grove School, Pittsylvania County, Virginia, July 2003. Pittsylvania County School Board records confirm Elbridge Miller’s report of \$2,050 salary at Hill Grove School in 1951-1952. Katie B. Stone made \$2,000 that year.
8. Evelyn T. Whittler, oral account of teaching at Hill Grove School, Pittsylvania County, March 2003; written account of teaching at Hill Grove School, Pittsylvania County, August 2003.
9. Deed Book 451, pp. 548-550, Pittsylvania County Circuit Court, Chatham, Virginia. Hill Grove School auction and sale records, Pittsylvania County School Board, Chatham, Virginia.
10. Hill Grove School, Hurt, Virginia, Pittsylvania County, Preliminary Information Form #071-5187, September 2002, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia.

**Bibliography**

Hill Grove School, Preliminary Information Form # 071-5187, September 2002. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia.

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Hunt, Earl L. Written account of attendance at Hill Grove School, Pittsylvania County, Virginia,  
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July 2003.

Miller, Elbridge Ragland. Written account of teaching at Hill Grove School, Pittsylvania County, Virginia, July 2003.

Mitchell, Indiana. Written account of attendance at Hill Grove School, Pittsylvania County, Virginia, July 2003.

Pittsylvania County Circuit Court. Chatham, Virginia. Deed Book 451.

Pittsylvania County School Board. Chatham, Virginia.

Hill Grove School, Insurance Inspection and Survey Report, 1941.

Hill Grove School, Salary Records, 1951-1952.

Hill Grove School, Auction and Sale Records, 1964, 1965.

Virginia State Planning Board. Pittsylvania County Study, 1938. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Whittler, Evelyn T. Oral account of teaching at Hill Grove School, Pittsylvania County, Virginia, March 2003. Written account of teaching at Hill Grove School, Pittsylvania County, Virginia, July 2003.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated parcel conforms to lot 22-A-12-L on Pittsylvania County tax map 22.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated parcel conforms to the original deed, c.1915, for the location of Hill Grove School.

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

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**Photographs**

All Photographs:

Hill Grove School, Pittsylvania County, Hurt vicinity, Virginia

August, 2003

Michael Pulice, photographer

VDHR Negative no. 20945

Negatives on file at Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources, Richmond, Va.

1. Schoolhouse, oblique view toward southeast corner.
2. Schoolhouse, front elevation.
3. Schoolhouse, oblique view toward southwest corner.
4. Schoolhouse, rear elevation.
5. Schoolhouse, oblique view toward northeast corner.
6. Interior, facing south from northwest corner of building.
7. Interior, kitchen, facing south west.